

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Catholic abuse cases, primarily involving blacks, are settled on cheap



WONG MAYE-E — THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

La Jarvis D. Love is seen reflected by a mirror at his home in Senatobia, Miss., in June. Love says he regrets agreeing to keep his alleged sexual abuse secret.

By Michael Rezendes
The Associated Press
GREENWOOD, MISSISSIPPI » The IHOP in Southaven, Mississippi, was an unlikely place to settle a sex abuse claim against the Catholic Church. But in January, a white official from the Franciscan religious order slid into a booth across from a 35-year-old black man and offered to pay him \$15,000

to keep years of alleged abuse by another Franciscan secret. The Rev. James G. Gannon, the leader of a Wisconsin-based group of Franciscan Friars, arrived at the crowded pancake house with copies of a legal settlement for La Jarvis D. Love, who had arrived with his wife and three young children. As Love skimmed the

four-page agreement, his thoughts flickered back more than two decades to the physical and sexual abuse he says he suffered at the hands of a Franciscan Friar at a Catholic grade school in Greenwood. He told Gannon he wasn't sure \$15,000 was enough. "He said if I wanted more, I would have to get a lawyer and have my lawyer call his lawyer," Love re-

cently told The Associated Press. "Well, we don't have lawyers. We felt like we had to take what we could." Love considered his mounting bills, his young family and, with his wife's consent, signed the agreement, dating it Jan. 11, 2019. Then Gannon announced it was time to eat. "He was all smiles then," Love said. At the time, Love didn't

understand that the agreement he signed is unusual in several respects. It includes a confidentiality requirement, even though American Catholic leaders have barred the use of non-disclosure agreements in sex abuse settlements. In addition, the amount of money Gannon and the Franciscans offered is far less than what many other sex abuse victims have re-

ceived through legal settlements with the Catholic Church. In 2006, the Diocese of Jackson, Mississippi, settled a handful of lawsuits with 19 victims, 17 of whom were white, for \$5 million and an average payout of more than \$250,000 for each survivor. More recent settlements have ranged even higher, including an average payment of nearly

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